

Sharing the River of Life

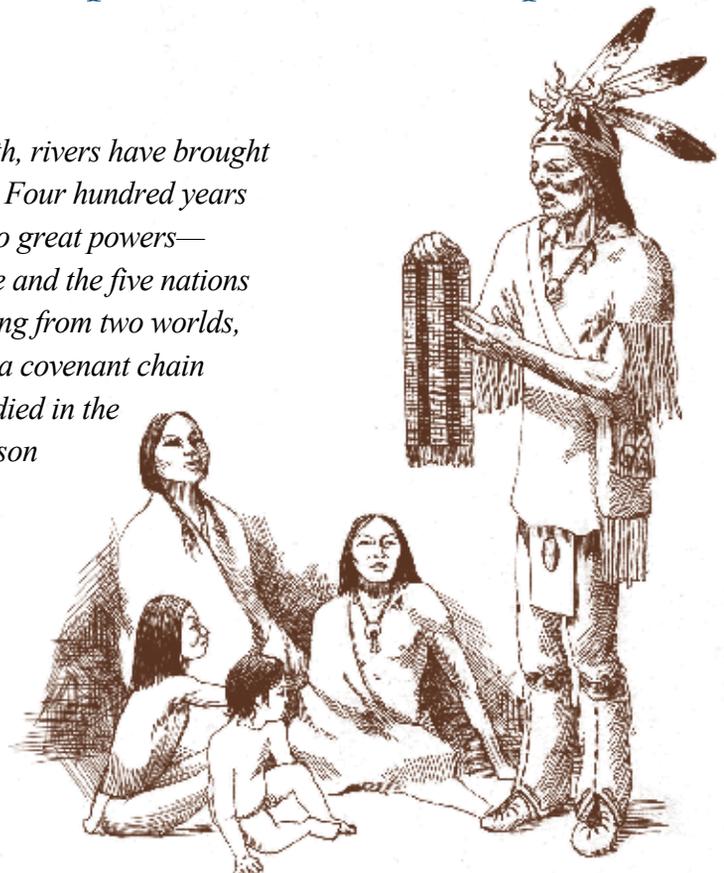


Jeremy Schaller

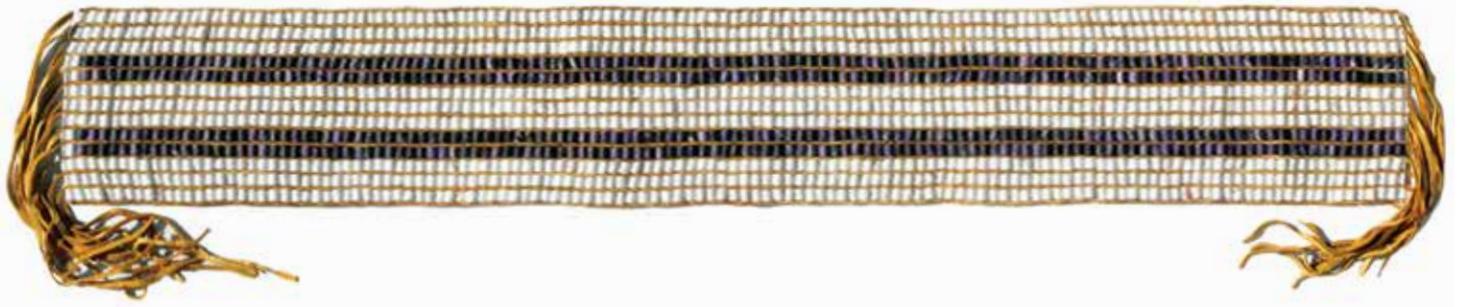
—Traveling side by side on the Hudson River toward a sustainable future of peace and friendship

By Aya Yamamoto

For as long as rain has fallen to the Earth, rivers have brought together the two worlds of land and water. Four hundred years ago the Hudson River brought together two great powers—the trading enterprises of the Dutch empire and the five nations of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. Coming from two worlds, brought together by this river, they forged a covenant chain of peace, friendship, and perpetuity, embodied in the Two Row Wampum. This summer the Hudson River will bring our peoples together once more. Where the land and water meet, where two worlds join forces, witness history come to life and take part in creating a just and sustainable future.



John Kahionhes Fadden



Rivers have always captivated the imagination. Cultures around the world view rivers as symbols of time, spiritual enlightenment, change, power, peace, and life itself. Their banks are the gateway between two worlds: land and water. They abound in highly diverse habitats, so life congregates near rivers. Rivers have also been extremely important for transport. In North America, they served as vital travel corridors long before the arrival of Europeans.

In the early seventeenth century, the rivers of what is now called New York State brought Dutch traders and settlers into the homeland of the people whose teachings would serve as a template for American democracy. They were the Haudenosaunee, or Iroquois, who to this day refer to waterways as the blood vessels of Mother Earth.

The Haudenosaunee Confederacy is one of the oldest living democracies on the planet. It consisted originally of five nations: the Mohawk on the east; the Oneida; the Onondaga in the geographic center; the Cayuga; and the Seneca on the west. The Tuscarora joined the Confederacy in 1722. The story of the Confederacy's formation, in which five warring nations were brought together under the Great Law of Peace, and the actual governmental operation of the Confederacy had a great influence on America's founders (see House Concurrent Resolution 331 at www.senate.gov/reference/resources/pdf/hconres331.pdf).

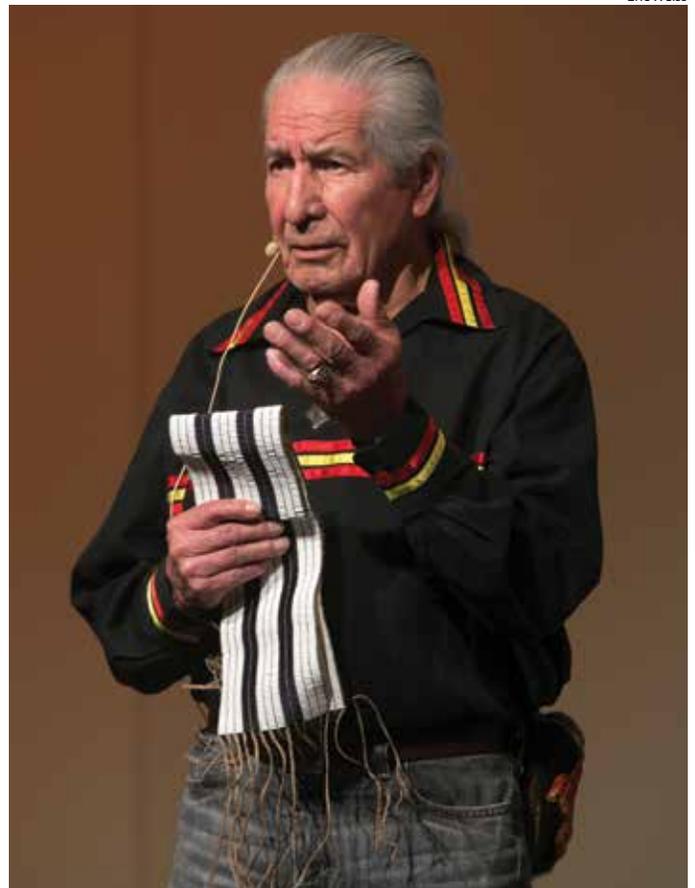
Between 1609 and 1664, Dutch trading posts and settlements clustered along the Hudson River, the northernmost being Fort Orange (Albany) and the southernmost being New Amsterdam (New York City). Just as rivers bring together the two worlds of land and water, the Hudson River brought together the worlds of two peoples—each with different languages, customs, laws and worldviews. The Dutch and Haudenosaunee met at this juncture and forged a binding chain of peace, friendship and perpetuity for the sake of both nations' future generations. For the Haudenosaunee this linkage was symbolically captured in the Two Row Wampum, or Guswentá, which became the foundation for all the subsequent treaties it made with Netherlands, England, France and the United States.

Stephen Lang



Wampum beads are made from quahog clam shells.

Eric Weiss



Onondaga Faithkeeper Oren Lyons

The Two Row Wampum symbolizes how the two nations should relate to each other. The two purple rows that give the belt its name represent the Haudenosaunee in their canoes and the Dutch in their ships, traveling side by side down the River of Life, respecting each other's laws, cultures, and worldviews, and working together to protect their shared environment. The three white bands represent peace, friendship and perpetuity, which are three principles routinely referred to in subsequent treaties made by the Haudenosaunee.

The Two Row Wampum Renewal Campaign is a grassroots educational campaign encouraging United States citizens to honor native treaties and protect the Earth. The campaign seeks to unite neighbors on themes of justice and environmental healing for the good of all future generations, using the Two Row Wampum as a model. The campaign, being conducted throughout New York State during 2013, began as a collaborative effort between the Onondaga Nation and the Neighbors of the Onondaga Nation (NOON), a project of the Syracuse Peace Council.

Through community and university events, social media, online resources,



Onondaga Chief Jake Edwards

and outreach to schools, the campaign seeks to educate the general public about treaties and indigenous perspectives on environmental issues. It also aims to highlight our shared environment, including the Hudson River itself, as the common ground that we must work together to protect. The campaign is based on the understanding that we have an obligation to fulfill the responsibilities outlined in treaties—responsibilities to each other and to the land that have been ignored for far too long.

This summer, the campaign's focal point will bring the Two Row Wampum to life on the Hudson River. From July 28-August 9 two rows of canoes and kayaks—with native people in one row and allies in the other—will paddle side by side from Albany to New York City. The event will kick off with a cultural festival in Troy on Saturday, July 27. The flotilla will then set out the following morning, with participants scheduled to paddle between 9 and 15 miles each day and camp along the route.

Just as the Hudson River brought our peoples together 400 years ago, so will the river unite us again this summer. Educational and cultural events (some large, some small) are planned at many stops along the river. The gatherings will feature cultural sharing and talks by Haudenosaunee leaders and allies. The flotilla is scheduled to stop at Schodack, Coxsackie, Kingston, Poughkeepsie, Beacon and Croton Point, before ending in New York City on August 9th at the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples celebration (www.un.org/en/events/indigenousday).

For more information about the Two Row Campaign, including the latest information about the flotilla, visit <http://honortheworow.org>.

Aya Yamamoto is an organizer, educator, and paddler for the Two Row Wampum Renewal Campaign, and a graduate of the SUNY-College of Environmental Science and Forestry.



Onondaga Clan Mother Freida Jacques